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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2008/L.



Statement

The preparation and implementation of public policies from a gender equity perspective strengthens institutional work by fostering actions that promote and favour gender equality. Comprehensive public policies whose programmes incorporate cultural, political, economic and social aspects are more effective in the delivery of public services because they benefit the entire population on an equal basis.

Egalitarian public policies are produced using a tool known as gender-responsive budgeting, which includes planning, scheduling and budgeting from a gender perspective.

Gender-responsive budgeting is a long-term project which involves a process of reflection, sensitization, awareness-raising, know-how and action within institutions. Only individual public-sector institutions have an in-depth knowledge of the problems they face and how to tackle and/or solve them. This means that the people responsible for making decisions and designing policies need to be the ones who carry out the process of reflection, alongside people engaged in gender analysis and those involved in proposing solutions to such problems. The resulting exchange of knowledge will make it possible to achieve the objective of planning, scheduling and budgeting using gender equality criteria.

This is a long-term process because it involves collecting the available information, designing and monitoring the first steps and generating new proposals, thereby continuing to generate multipliers that gradually help to consolidate policy changes. Staff training in various governmental agencies is vitally important so that they may continue to propose changes and to analyse proposals geared towards the achievement of gender equality.

It should be noted that policies developed using gender-responsive budgeting include not only policies directed towards the population but also policies concerning the internal functioning of agencies.

Gender-responsive budgeting in government is the result of a number of phases: first, a gender analysis, using gender-disaggregated data, of the problems that need to be addressed; second, a review of existing programmes to evaluate whether they take into account the interests and needs of different population groups in an equitable manner, and, where necessary, a definition of new components or new inclusive programmes; and third, the allocation of relevant resources.

The term "gender-responsive budgeting" refers to public policies designed to achieve gender equality that have the human, material and financial resources required for that purpose. In other words, in the case of policies geared towards the population, problem areas have been analysed and efforts will be made to address them without losing sight of any differences that may exist between various population groups in terms of access and care. Existing differences between how men and women, and how different population groups, are treated are a result of the prevailing culture. In everyday life these differences give rise to constraints or difficulties in terms of access to public services. In some cases this can lead to discrimination against individuals seeking services or result in the denial of services. The different situations that arise each time a service is provided to the public therefore need to be analysed. New programmes can then be designed, or

existing programmes supplemented, to ensure that the whole population is treated in an equitable manner.

It is important to point out that the preparation of programmes and budgets from a gender perspective requires budget transparency. In addition, information directly related to budgets and to the population served must be transparent. Programme-specific budgets that can be monitored are also required, to ensure accountability to the public.

In this way, not only will policies, programmes and budgets with a gender perspective fulfil their main aim, which is to benefit the entire population, but they will also promote efficiency, transparency and accountability.

It is proposed that gender mainstreaming in governmental agencies be carried out through gender-responsive programming and budgeting. The work in each agency would be conducted by the existing women's mechanisms in each country or area. One component of this work would be staff training and another would be planning, which includes defining both the internal regulations and the external policy of each agency. This would ensure that each governmental body provides equitable treatment, equal access to services and, in general, public policies that benefit each population group and society as a whole.